

(Washington, DC)—Today Congresswoman Gwen Moore and Congressman John Barrow (D-GA) introduced the Minority Owned Venture Empowerment (MOVE) Act, legislation which would modernize the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program.

"It is of great concern to me that the 8(a) program—one of our government's main tools for helping minority entrepreneurs access federal contracts—hasn't been updated in nearly 20 years. With the number of minority-owned businesses on the rise and available for contract work, it only makes sense to strengthen the 8(a) program so that these ventures can compete fairly in the federal marketplace, grow their enterprises, and create new jobs," Moore said.

According to the Small Business Administration's very own Office of Advocacy, minorities owned 18 percent of U.S. firms in 2002, up from 7 percent in 1982. Black-owned firms increased by 45 percent in just five years from 1997 to 2002; Hispanic-owned firms increased 31 percent.

"The more than 3 million minority-owned businesses in America employ almost 5 million people and generate nearly \$600 billion in revenue," Georgia Congressman John Barrow (D-Savannah) said. "They're the fastest growing sector in the economy. But despite the fact that minorities make up nearly one-third of the U.S. population, they own only 15 percent of businesses. That's a serious business ownership divide in this country."

The 8(a) program, named after Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act, is the last remaining federal program focusing on the development of minority-owned businesses through the award of federal contracts. Regrettably, the program has not been updated since 1988 and, as a result, many federal agencies view it as an outdated contracting option. The MOVE Act will strengthen the program by modernizing it, refocusing the program on business development, and providing up-front training to help ensure that participating companies can better manage their businesses and compete for federal contracts. These changes will make the 8(a) program a more effective initiative in the development of minority entrepreneurs.

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